



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Teacher Advisory/GEA Committee

November 26, 2018

Dr. Clemons welcomed everyone and hoped they were able to relax and spend time with family over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Technology Update – Jim Brogan, Director of Technology, attended the meeting to address questions regarding Chromebooks for testing, outdated laptops, and computers updating while classes are using them, requiring restarts. Mr. Brogan said the division is moving to Chromebooks because they are much less expensive than laptops and will help to put more devices in the hands of students. Currently, all 6th grade students are being issued Chromebooks for use at school and home. Next year, 7th grade will also be receiving Chromebooks. GHS currently has an e-backpack program, but devices only last about four years. Therefore, we will need to replace those at some point. Every school has at least one hundred Chromebooks and they are capable of being used for testing in kiosk mode and students should have an opportunity to become familiar with those prior to testing. Mr. Brogan hasn't had many complaints this year, but if anyone is having issues with wireless connection, please submit a ticket. The new policy in GCPS that prohibits student use of cell phone unless authorized in class has helped greatly with connectivity issues that had been occurring at GHS. Mr. Brogan added that the state standard for testing is one device for every five students and GCPS far exceeds that amount. In the case of labs with random computers needing to be restarted, a ticket may be submitted that states it is occurring randomly in the lab. The name of the teacher should also be included when the ticket is submitted. Mr. Brogan does recommend that with the current version of Windows, all computers be turned off at night. He will send an email to all staff to inform them. Mr. Brogan reiterated that if devices are not working properly, a ticket should be submitted for them to be repaired or replaced.

Mr. Brogan also informed members there had been many issues with the PowerSchool gradebook changes that occurred this year, but the division is not in a position to replace the program at this time.

Currently, Sharon Carino and Jessica Lawson are the only tech teachers in our elementary schools, but the school division plans to have one in every elementary school in the future. IT technicians are assigned to every building (Becky Blalock/Abingdon & Achilles; Hanna Bychowski/Page & GHS; Jeff Stevens/ Peasley & Bethel; and Pam Gaghigh/Botetourt & Petsworth).

Mr. Brogan said laptops are repaired whenever possible. He added that when students break keys off of the keyboard, they are often not able to be repaired. Chromebooks, because of their cost, are usually not cost effective to fix. Broken equipment is kept for parts.

If IA or practice tests are used on Chromebooks, it should simulate state testing. Mr. Brogan added that we may be replacing IA with a similar product because the state is pushing HTML 5 and it won't allow IA to update. Performance Matters is the new program and should be a better program when implemented. If schools require mice for Chromebooks, he suggests using a portion of the \$10 technology student fee. Mr. Brogan also said overhead projectors have been replaced at Botetourt and Achilles and others as needed. He added that the smartboards in most of the buildings are obsolete and new models are expensive.

In the future, Dr. Clemons will explore leasing technology equipment. If reasonable, it may be an avenue to use to upgrade our equipment.

Substitute Teacher Update – Gwyn Ciemniecki, Director of Human Resources and Compliance, attended the meeting to give an update on substitutes. Currently, there are about six teaching positions to be filled, a number of support positions, and there is always a need for substitutes. Fifty-eight substitutes have been hired since July 1st, which gives us a total of one hundred twenty-seven in the system at the current time. This should mean there is a substitute available for every three teachers. A few of those are college students who only work during breaks, but the rest have worked at least once this year. There are also over one hundred substitutes for para-pro positions, with ninety-three of those who will also work in Special Education positions. Despite the numbers, we continue to struggle to fill positions. When the unemployment rate drops below 4%, it becomes difficult to fill positions. Ms. Ciemniecki said it is currently a “workers market” and the nature of substitute work is that we may not call every day and at the same time, substitutes aren't required to come every time we call. The number of substitutes currently available is the highest we've had in three years. If any substitutes have indicated they are having difficulty finding jobs, they may need to contact Human Resources to be sure they've indicated they are available for every building. Teachers also have the option to eliminate someone from being able to substitute for them.

Melanie Glenn (Botetourt) expressed concerns about staff being able to obtain substitutes on the December 20th makeup day, noting that some teachers have doctor's appointments scheduled. Dr. Clemons stated that at times, there will be inconveniences, but we can't control the weather and sometimes it requires us to look at days we hadn't planned to take. Personal or Leave w/o Pay requests for that day will be considered on a case by case basis. We currently have a 176 day calendar, but he hopes to get back to 180 days at some point, which would give us more flexibility. Even with the days we are making up, it is only 2.5 out of 5 missed. The only make-up day left on the calendar is June 10th. If we miss more, we could be in school the week of June 10th. If that occurs, we may need to request to change our testing window.

Substitute pay rates per day range from \$75 without a degree to \$125 for long term substitute assignments. Long term assignments are now a minimum of ten days instead of thirty and if known ahead of time, that rate goes in effect from the beginning. Dr. Clemons would like to increase substitute pay, but would need to weigh the priorities for the upcoming budget.

Amber Wilburn (Bethel) explained the issue she discussed at the previous meeting, where a volunteer at Bethel hadn't been called to substitute, noting that the individual had not completed the necessary requirements needed. In response to her inquiry regarding the timeframe for following-up

with an applicant, Ms. Ciemniecki said it varies depending on where they are in the system and potential substitutes should contact the Human Resources office with any questions they may have.

Budget Update – Budget meetings will begin with principals next Monday, December 3rd. Compensation and health insurance will be the main priority when budgeting for next year. Dr. Clemons plans to look at the state salary scale to determine if more needs to be done for teacher salaries and also will be looking at support staff salaries. On Tuesday, Dec. 4th Dr. Clemons will address the Board of Supervisors at their meeting regarding Elementary School Resource officers and the Achilles Playground equipment. He hopes to receive approval for two full-time resource officers beginning 2nd semester. We have not been able to fill the part-time positions due to a lack of interest in a position without benefits. He would also like to apply for a grant in the spring when the state is expected to provide additional funding for resource officers. He would like to have an officer in all five elementary schools in the near future. He is also asking for an acceleration of funding (\$124k) for the Achilles playground equipment due to having to close the playground at the beginning of November. If approved, it should take six weeks for delivery and installation. The playground item is on the CIP for the FY20 year, so Dr. Clemons expects the Board of Supervisors will be supportive under the circumstances adding that they unanimously approved providing the bi-directional amplifiers that were recently requested. Ms. Dehoux will include in the minutes the results of the BOS meeting. **Great news: The BOS unanimously approved (at its December 4th meeting) the funding for the Achilles Playground as well as the funding for the two full-time Elementary School Resource Officers.**

Items from Teacher Advisory/GEA Members

Jennifer Worrell (Petsworth) inquired about funds to replace reading room books that are falling apart. Dr. Clemons asked that emails regarding what is needed be sent to him. Dr. Chuck Wagner and Jennifer McSweeney, GCPS Literacy Specialist, are looking at what is available for K-5 resources.

In response to the inquiry made at a previous meeting regarding compensation for teachers who cover classes when someone is absent, Dr. Clemons said he will be inquiring with superintendents at the regional meeting on December 5th about this issue as well as employee sick/personal leave options in other divisions. He said some divisions may allow flexibility to switch a day of sick leave to personal leave. He will explore it, but wants to be able to give supporting data before presenting to the school board. He isn't opposed to doing something new, but usually, it is beneficial to look at what other divisions are doing as well.

Christy Phillips (Achilles) expressed concerns regarding continued mold issues in a certain area of Achilles E.S. She will email Dr. Clemons the name of the teacher still having an issue.

Ms. Glenn (Botetourt) thanked Dr. Clemons for allowing teachers additional planning time. Ms. Hudgins arranged for her teachers to have 80 minutes straight one day and plans to do it at least one more day this year. Ms. Glenn added that it was very productive. Dr. Clemons said it may be a possibility to add back in the schedule if the school year is extended to 180 days and reminded members that elementary early release days were originated from the Teacher Advisory Committee.

Megan Harris (Peasley) asked if we went back to 180 days, would our hours change. Dr. Clemons said probably not. When we had a 180 day calendar before, elementary teachers had 20 minutes on

each end of the day without students and now they have 10 minutes on each end. Even if the full amount of hours potentially lost could not be made up, it would help teachers to be better prepared.

The Teacher Advisory Committee/GEA will not meet in December. The next meeting will be held on January 28, 2019.

Adjournment: 6:13 p.m.